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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 29, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Pivniuk): O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as they may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire in which is in accordance with Thy will, that we seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning, Deputy Speaker. On House business, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the next—that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie). The title of the resolution is Inclusion of a Land Acknowledgement in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable member for saint—the honourable Opposition House Leader, pursuant to rule 33-8, I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered for the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward for the honourable member for Keewatinook. The title of the resolution is Inclusion of a Land Acknowledgement in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

* * *

Ms. Fontaine: Will you call for continued debate Bill 223 from 10 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., or, if it finishes earlier, before 10:30 a.m., and then afterwards call Bill 229 for second reading debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced—it was been declared by the honourable member—the Opposition House Leader that to have second reading of—on debate on Bill 223, The Spirit Bear Day Act, from 10 to 10:30, providing that if we—if the—if we finished earlier, then we'll go on to the second reading of Bill 229, The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 223—The Spirit Bear Day Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And now for the debate on 223—continue of debate on 223, in the name of the honourable member for Rossmere, has seven minutes remaining.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I'm quite happy to speak in support of this bill.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Micklefield: And, mirth aside, it is actually a bill that talks about a very serious matter: the matter of Indigenous children receiving timely health care and not having different jurisdictions of government pass the buck, send the email, wait for the phone call to be returned, figure out who funds what, who does what, who is responsible for what, while that child fails to receive the care that is needed.

This is something all of us agree on. I don't know why anyone would disagree with Jordan's Principle and I think, sadly, the person who the principle is named after tells a story that should never have happened, nor should ever happen again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole notion of Indigenous care is complex and something that is going to be ongoing discussion for a long time. And I think it's important that we find footholds we can all agree on, to find places in the discussion we can all support, we can all endorse, we can embrace together and say, on this we can agree. And let's work from there. And this is such a principle. This is such an issue.

So this, Jordan's Principle, hails back to Jordan Anderson, a member of Norway House Cree Nation, who was born with multiple disabilities and sadly passed in 2005. If I recall correctly, Jordan basically

lived in hospital their whole life—and I stand to be corrected on that if I'm wrong—but certainly, this was a child who was very sick.

But that's not even the nub of what we're discussing. What we're discussing is that Jordan had the buck passed from one jurisdiction to another. There was confusion. There was poor communication. And the life of that child was not what it might have been.

And so I'm happy to support, this morning—I'm happy to stand with colleagues across the aisle this morning. I'm happy to affirm our commitment to Jordan's Principle. It's been raised in numerous places—Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has spoken on this issue and said that it needs to be addressed for all First Nations children, on- or off-reserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that we don't just remember this and say, you know, now 16 years later, yes, that was really sad. I hope that we can actually implement this principle, not only in cases that might be easy to say, oh, this is similar to Jordan's Principle, but in situations where the principle might apply, even though the circumstances are a little bit different.

I just want to put a couple of other things on the record. Following this sad situation, there are a number of developments in the first decade of 2000s and into the teens and 2012, the joint committee, terms of reference became expanded to include First Nations representation. The Province of Manitoba and the nation of Canada announced a formalized process to implement Jordan's Principle. The process is called case conferencing to case resolution.

Look, I don't personally need to get caught up in language stuff. The point is this: when there's a sick child, we want to make sure that child gets the care that they need. We want to make sure that child gets the help they need. We don't want to be pointing at some other office or some other jurisdiction. Progress has been made, but this is something that we need to continue to make sure it doesn't get forgotten, doesn't get lost, doesn't get formalized in a wrong way.

* (10:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't want to belabour the point more than I have this morning. I think others want to speak, and so I'll happily cede the floor. I look forward to not only supporting this but passing it and supporting members opposite in this regard.

I think it's a good moment in this House—and those moments do happen—when we can work together, and I certainly hope there are more of these

moments. I know we have our disagreements in here, but I think we all want what is best for Manitobans. And where that's obvious, such as is the case this morning, we can come together, and I hope we can find more areas of common agreement like we've found this morning with this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll allow the floor to go to a colleague. Thank you.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the opportunity to speak to—in favour of Bill 223. I look forward to supporting this legislation. I know colleagues on my side of the House do as well.

First, I'd like to, well, thank everyone, all Manitobans who have taken the time to get vaccinated. I know this is a real crucial step in getting Manitoba back to some semblance of normalcy. It's been a very challenging year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the sooner Manitobans register for the vaccine, the sooner everyone can get back to doing the things we all love to do. I know that a number of colleagues in this Chamber have already received their first shot and, although I'm not quite eligible yet, I will be registering to get my vaccine as soon as I am able.

Over the past two weeks, we've seen social media sheets were dominated by the 40-plus crowd getting the AstraZeneca shot, and some people posted pictures of them getting the shot, some wore their I'm-COVID-vaccinated stickers while others used texts to express their joy and relief.

Of the many uplifting quotes and statements, the one that stands out the most for me is a quote from Michelle Carnegie, a resident of Lagimodière. She said that, and I quote, after being vaccinated on Monday, I had more of an emotional response than I expected. After getting to the car to go home, my eyes began to fill up with tears. I felt hope. I could see the end in sight. I picture being able to hug my parents, having family gatherings again, travelling to finally meet my niece, visiting friends and just being able to go back to normal some day soon. It reminded me of what I've been missing and what and who is truly important to me. End quote.

So I think this sums up the feelings of many Manitobans, especially when vaccines were finally offered to the 40-plus age category. For them and many of us, this is the first time during the entire pandemic that people are starting to see light at the end of the tunnel.

And with respect to Bill 223, again, I thank the member for introducing this bill. Our government is committed to putting the needs of children first so that service is not delayed for children with disabilities. The Manitoba government will work with First Nations leadership and federal government to develop a co-ordinated approach to implementing the full scope of Jordan's Principle in the province.

A teddy bear called Spirit Bear has become a symbol for Jordan's Principle, and many of us in this House are aware, but Jordan's Principle was established by First Nations in response to the death of five-year-old Jordan River Anderson, a child from Norway House Cree Nation who suffered from Carey-Fineman-Ziter syndrome, a rare muscular disorder that required years of medical treatment in a Winnipeg hospital.

Unfortunately, after spending the first two years of his life in the hospital, doctors did clear him to live in a family home near the hospital in Winnipeg. However, the federal and provincial governments could not resolve who was financially responsible for the necessary home care, and for over two years, the Government of Canada and Manitoba continued to argue while Jordan remained in the hospital. In 2005, at the tender age of five years old, Jordan lost his life in the hospital. He never had the opportunity to live in a family home.

Mr. Speaker, this—Mr. Deputy Speaker, my apologies—this tragic story led to the increased awareness of the issue. And it was the former member of Agassiz, Mr. Briese, who did sponsor a resolution regarding Jordan's Principle that received unanimous support for all parties in the House.

Jordan's Principle is now intended to eliminate the gaps in services and ensure substantive quality—our equality, rather, for First Nations children. It was created in memory of Jordan Anderson, the young boy from Norway Cree nation—Norway House Cree Nation, born with multiple disabilities and who lost his life tragically in 2005.

In 2008, Manitoba was the first province to sign a bilateral agreement with Canada to implement Jordan's Principle. The provincial and federal government established a joint committee on the implementation of Jordan's Principle to address the delays or disruptions resulting from jurisdictional disputes.

Currently, any Jordan's Principle-related issue is resolved as it emerges, at the first point of contact, usually by front-line service delivery staff. Staff are

available to consult on all aspects of service delivery in Manitoba and will continue to co-ordinate with the federal government and First Nation partners and Families.

Manitoba is committed to supporting our federal partners to honour the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling which requires that all First Nations children have access to needed services, regardless of where they live. Manitoba supports a broad community-driven approach to Jordan's Principle, which seeks to eliminate the service gaps for children living on reserve.

We are engaged in informational, interdepartmental meetings regarding implementation of Jordan's Principle. It is important for our departments to keep up-to-date on the pressing needs of First Nations children and youth in the province of Manitoba.

The Department of Families is leading an inter-departmental Jordan's Principle working group with INR, Education, training, Health and seniors and active living to share on Jordan's Principle and develop recommendations on a common provincial position and implementation plan.

The working group has developed a teams of reference and has determined that the group's purpose and goals are to determine areas of common interest and share information, including legal advice among departments related to the current implementation of Jordan's Principle in Manitoba, scope out concerns and questions about the future implementation of Jordan's Principle and to determine what the renewed provincial position might be, make a recommendation to senior management on a renewed provincial position on Jordan's Principle, prepare provincial documents and common responses to external stakeholders, where appropriate.

I know that it's been spoken to by a number of members in this Chamber, including the—just recently, the member from Rossmere, the strong support our side of the House has for this proposed bill. So I want to cede the floor to another member who may want to speak to this and add their thoughts to this important proposed legislation.

Again, I will leave by saying, I support this bill. And I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this—to Bill 223. Thank you.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It's a great pleasure to be able to speak to this important bill and to—albeit from a virtual position—be able to participate in this

bipartisan or multi-partisan moment—non-partisan moment. I think we have an opportunity here to do something important and I'm pleased to support this bill and do the right thing.

And this is so serious, and I think we have an opportunity here to honour the memory of Jordan Rivers [*phonetic*] Anderson. And the more I read of that story, his story and his circumstances and—the more outraged I am by the history, the background, the fact that the governments of Manitoba and Canada argued for two years while he remained in hospital, just because they were unable to resolve a cross-jurisdictional dispute.

* (10:20)

And I'm also saddened, Mr. Speaker, by the fact that, you know, he never had the opportunity to go home and experience the love that a family community could provide, and I just think it's tragic, and I think it's important to honour his memory and to ensure that this doesn't happen again.

And so, as I said, I think we have the opportunity to do a right thing and do the right thing here, and I'm happy to support this bill. I know there are other members that do wish to speak. I'll be very brief.

I do want to say, however, that seeing as this is my last opportunity before the constituency week to address my constituents in this manner, I just want to encourage them, in the face of this third wave and in light of news that the vaccine uptake is a little lower in some areas in my constituency, that, you know, it's important that constituents know that these vaccines are safe and the right one to take is the first one that you're offered.

And I encourage all constituents to do the right thing: to take the vaccine for yourself, for your loved ones, for your families, for your communities. I know we're all tired, we all want to get through this, but we've got to abide by the public health orders and get vaccinated and finally put an end, whatever that looks like, but move on and get back to whatever normal we have.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I'm, again, pleased to support this important bill as I reflect on the memory of Jordan Rivers [*phonetic*] Anderson.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading of Bill 223, The Spirit Bear Day Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

I declare the motion carried.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 229—The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As announced before, we are going to move on to Bill 229, The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses), that Bill 229, The Restriction on Material Accompanying Government Cheques Act; Loi imposant des restrictions sur le matériel accompagnant les chèques émis par le gouvernement, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: I don't think it's news to anybody in this House that there's growing cynicism about politicians these days. There's certainly a perception in the public that politicians are just in it for themselves, and that they ignore the needs of the people who actually put them into a position of power. While that perception isn't always fair, it's real and a legitimate concern of Manitobans.

I think we have to recognize that, and we have to do what we can as elected officials to preserve the integrity of our political system. It's about trust and having the public trust in what we do and how we conduct our business. And I think the way that we establish that trust is that we make sure our laws enhance the integrity of our political system, so that Manitobans know that government finances are not going to be misused for purely self-promotion or for partisan gains.

So the purpose of this act is meant to ensure that the public trust is not abused, that governments do not engage in cynical, partisan political actions with taxpayer resources. And so this act would prohibit the name, image or title of a Cabinet minister, including the First Minister, from being used on any material included with a cheque mailed by the government or

any government agency. This would prevent a government, any government, from using rebate cheques for selfish, cynical, political self-promotion.

And it would do another thing. It would also level the playing field politically. Opposition parties obviously do not have access to taxpayers' money and cannot and do not send out government cheques with the names or branding on it. And there is, I think, widespread agreement from all parties in this House that taxpayer money should not be used for partisan, political purposes.

And we've already gone down the road a little bit with this. We have some strict laws preventing governments from declaring new funding announcements close to an election. I think over time we've learned that that was a loophole, that it amounted to free 'advertising' for the government party, that was basically a political subsidy and only one that a government party could access, and it disadvantaged other political parties.

And the current Pallister government certainly advocated for these policies, and I don't disagree with them. I think that was right that they did that.

But this law that we're talking about today is basically an extension of that work. The same logic applies. The same policy prescription applies. So this would close another loophole that can be abused by a government party—that provides, basically, an advertising subsidy that isn't open to other political parties.

So we know this government is not beyond using this loophole, and has used this loophole in the past. And we just have to look at last year at the rebate cheques that were sent out, and that was about \$45 million of borrowed money which was sent to seniors whether they needed it or not. And it was basically a tool from the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—had his signature on it—and it was all about branding and self-promotion.

And ironically, this Premier and his government's popularity dropped after those cheques were sent out. So it didn't even have the desired effect that this government had wanted. They were widely criticised for what was obvious to everybody at the time, that this was a partisan political move. And not only did, you know, the Premier lose respect from the, sort of, you know, the commentariat, but also, you know, it also affected his hapless Cabinet and the entire PC Party.

And, you know, that's fine, they deserve it and nobody's going to shed a tear for them. But my concern is that there's a spillover effect because when they do this, Manitobans have a hard time distinguishing between ethical and moral political parties like the Manitoba NDP and more, sort of, cronyistic and cynical, self-serving parties like the PCs. And so everybody gets painted with the same sort of sleazy brush.

And it certainly ends up infecting the integrity of the entire political system. People mistrust politicians, even though it's really the PCs that they mistrust, and they stop voting. They stop being engaged and they stop being part of the democratic process. And that hurts all of us. And it makes our democracy less than it ought to be.

So this kind of bill would be needed, you know, now more than ever, because we've seen that this government has a history and a track record of not being trusted with making sure the best decisions for all Manitobans and leaving partisan politics out of important things like taxation.

So, unfortunately, this is very necessary because we know this government is currently attempting to use the education property tax rebates for Manitobans as a political self-promotion tool. Rather than getting these cheques out to Manitobans as fast as they can, we're now going through this laboured process with Bill 71 so that they can basically put the Premier's branding and signature on these thing—on these cheques. And that this is a form of taxpayer-funded subsidy for political advertising for the government.

So tax information should be non-partisan. It's not appropriate for any government to use taxation as an opportunity for self-promotion or the dissemination of political propaganda. And this government's Bill 71, if passed, would require tax notices to include, in quotes, material supplied by the minister.

* (10:30)

So bill 20–229 would remedy this. It would give this government an opportunity to prove that this is not, in fact, a political stunt to force the inclusion of government propaganda with important tax information, and that they're genuine when they say they want to do this for the, you know, sincere benefit of Manitobans and not for their own cynical, political will.

So I would hope, given their own track record on advertising close to writ drops, this is basically the same type of bill, same type of idea behind it, that they

would go, yes, you know what, this is fair and we're going to be in opposition soon probably for another 17 years, and we don't want you guys doing this to us, and so let's keep a level playing field and let's do what's right for Manitobans, set aside partisan, you know, sort of gamesmanship and just make some good policy. And this bill really is an opportunity for us as Manitobans to do that, and this would sort of prevent the sort of gamesmanship of the past and make it basically fairer for future governments.

So, I mean, we all know that tax measures this government have put forward, they could've been done through existing means, they could've been done yesterday or even last week. And even if they insisted that the cheques must go out, they certainly could've introduced Bill 71 earlier to guarantee its passage. But they chose to wait—again, another political game.

And I think when we look at the fact that this is going to cost \$1.3 million of borrowed money at a time when, you know, tuition is being raised by this government, when hydro rates are being raised by the government, when there's being cuts to university, when there's being cuts to public schools and to the health-care system, that they have kept, you know, nurses' staffing levels dangerously and recklessly low, and there's vacancy rates throughout the public service so they can't respond to this unprecedented challenge that Manitoba's facing, that \$1.3 million is very much better spent elsewhere.

And this bill would prevent the temptation of any future government—including our own—from doing this, and I think its time has come and I certainly look forward to the Pallister government's support on this bill.

So, thank you very much.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period up to 10 minutes will be held. And questions may be addressed for the following sequence: first question be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions are—must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Can the member for Fort Garry please tell the House who he consulted with prior to drafting this bill?

An Honourable Member: I want to thank—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Oh, I apologize. Yes, I—no—I want to thank him for the question.

This is, certainly, with Bill 71 happening, and it's certainly being widely reported in the media about sort of the cynical nature of these cheques. We have ongoing conversations with Manitobans and constituents who express concern that their borrowed tax dollars would be used in such a cynical manner such as this.

And I think this is just, you know, common sense, and it's certainly in keeping with the legislative tradition in Manitoba where we're sort of going with closing these type of taxpayer subsidy political advertising rules.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): You know, in a year where the government's projecting a deficit to be going—spending \$1.3 million into sending cheques that's completely unnecessary, and in a year where there's so much economic difficulty for Manitobans, can you tell us where the government could have better invested their—this \$1.3 million?

Mr. Wasyliv: I think that's an excellent question because there is no shortage of need in Manitoba.

We certainly didn't have to raise tuition in Manitoba for university students. This certainly could've gone some way to mitigating that increase. We certainly didn't need to cut teachers at, you know, Pembina Trails School Division and others. And this certainly would go a long way to have prevented that.

And we certainly have seen, with the vaccine roll-out, how disastrous that been; how we have 100,000-plus vaccines sitting in freezers at any given day, in Manitoba.

And we're not anywhere getting near to getting our economy back on track—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

The honourable member for St. Vital—St. Boniface.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm just wondering, when it comes to—clearly, this is objectionable.

Is this—do you see this as being really any different than advertising for a budget, which is really no—which is a similar sort of thing, spending money

on advertising to promote a measure that is really just a legal measure on—that citizens don't necessarily have input in to?

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, certainly, I can't, to be honest, say that I've given that much thought, and I certainly would sit down with the member to have a longer conversation about it.

I think there's a difference between government advertising that increases public engagement, and that may include advertising a budget so people know what's in it, not necessarily that it's coming—I agree that there's something very cynical about that—then something like this where there's no public purpose to putting the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) name or signature on the cheque, and that it's just purely advertising and that it's a subsidy to the governing political party.

And, like I said, in my previous remarks, I think we've all agreed as—in this House—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I thank my colleague for bringing this bill forward this morning for discussion.

I'm just wondering if the member can explain why he is bringing this bill forward to debate this legislation, as opposed to putting his energy toward supporting Bill 71 and getting the much-needed tax relief to—directly to Manitobans, as opposed to his 'gamemanship' this morning?

Mr. Wasyliw: Yes, I—this isn't about getting tax relief to Manitobans because we know that's not true. It's about getting tax relief to huge corporate landlords and to the wealthiest of Manitobans. Actually, most Manitobans are going to see no benefit from this and, in fact, anyone who rents in Manitoba is going to be hurt by Bill 71.

This is about skewing the tax system for people who have the most and having it paid for by people who have the least. So it is entirely objectionable for this government to try to ram this through during the pandemic, when they're not even properly funding vaccine clinics, they're not properly funding a health-care system and they're dismantling an education system.

So we need to be talking about all of these issues, and the last thing—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Moses: It's clear that the tax policy put before by this government has been regressive. We've seen them take action to favour the wealthiest Manitobans at the expense of the poorest Manitobans, and it's shameful. It's having a real, long-lasting impact.

I want to ask you about this regressive policy and how—what are some of the real impacts that it's had on the lives of everyday Manitobans?

Mr. Wasyliw: We're seeing that this pandemic has not affected all Manitobans equally. And if you were doing just fine before the pandemic, you probably have been getting through it all right. In fact, some of our wealthiest Manitobans have profited from the pandemic and have done even better than they were doing beforehand.

That's not true for the vast majority of vulnerable Manitobans, including renters and small-business people. And this Bill 71 is another slap in the face to them when they need help and they're not getting it from this government. And not only are they not getting help from the government, the government is using this opportunity to further make our tax system—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Can the member please explain why they have brought this bill forward, while delaying the distribution of cheques, when it is our focus to get the much-needed tax relief to Manitobans like our young families and our seniors?

Mr. Wasyliw: Yes, I—it's interesting that this member thinks that the cheques are delayed. It's his government's fault, quite frankly. The government could provide this—these cheques right away. They don't need this bill. We know that. The minister, in the bill briefing, even admitted that they could do this without the bill, and that they could pass it through BITSA.

* (10:40)

So if their own Finance Minister says that they don't need this bill and they can send out the money like they—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Moses: We know this government plays games with—when it comes to politics: they called the election a year early, they're changing campaign rules to make it easier for them to advertise closer to an election date.

I want to ask the member, is this just another example of them changing the rules and playing by their own rules for their own political benefit?

Mr. Wasyliv: Well, I think the member from St. Vital is right and that's an astute observation. I'm hoping that they will look at their falling poll numbers and realize that Manitobans don't agree with them and don't share their values, and stop and just stop and then turn around and say, you know what, we're not going to do this, we're not going to put the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) signature on these cheques.

We're going to actually give meaningful tax relief to the people that're actually vulnerable who need it, not the wealthiest Manitobans who don't, and start actually listening to Manitobans—because you don't get that unpopular by listening to Manitobans.

And I imagine if they start listening to Manitoba, they would probably be happy with the results. And we're just not seeing that.

Mr. Nesbitt: Can the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) explain to the House why this legislation was not required when the previous NDP government carried out the practice they are now trying to prohibit?

Mr. Wasyliv: I can't speak to what happened in this building when I wasn't there and I wasn't part of those conversations. What I can speak to is what this government is doing and the cynicism and the political posturing and using taxpayer dollars to kind of get around, you know, the election finance laws and to subsidize unfairly their political ads campaign. That's wrong.

So, by the member's premise of his question, if he thinks that behaviour's wrong, vote for this bill and let's put an end to it. Let's make sure that—you guys are going to be in opposition very soon for many years, and if you don't like this practice, let's put a stop to it today. Vote for this bill.

Mr. Moses: It really appears that, you know, this government's on its way out and, on its way out, it's trying to give the largest tax breaks to its wealthiest friends. That's what it appears like to me and to—trying to take a lot of credit by putting his name on that cheque.

I'd like to get the member's opinion on if that's the way he sees this—the implementation of having the Premier's own name on the cheques.

Mr. Wasyliv: You know, I have immense respect for the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses)—I think another

astute and accurate, you know, assessment of what's going on here.

This is a government that's about to shut the lights off and check out, and they're rewarding their friends. And this is part of sort of who they are and their mentality. This isn't about helping Manitobans. It never was. This is not about getting help to the most vulnerable who need it. It never was. This is basically going to reward their campaign donors and the people that have stuck by them when they're on their way out.

And, you know, it's unfortunate, and we really need to put an end to this practice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up and time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): This morning we are debating Bill 229, a bill introduced by the honourable member for Fort Garry that would put restrictions on material accompanying government cheques. My honourable friend believes there is a problem with the Premier or a minister of a democratically elected government having their name attached to any information that might be sent with a government cheque.

This bill appears to suggest a fix for an imaginary problem. No one I know has ever complained when receiving a cheque in the mail and certainly not when it's a government cheque refunding their own hard-earned money. There's no doubt the member for Fort Garry has sponsored Bill 229 because he knows at some point the NDP are going to hear from irate taxpayers if they continue to block second reading of the education tax reduction act.

The education tax reduction act will begin the process of removing education tax from property across Manitoba. The owners of residential and farm properties will receive a rebate of 25 per cent of the education tax they pay this year. Next year, a further 25 per cent will be rebated. Commercial property owners will receive a 10 per cent rebate this year and next.

Our Progressive Conservative government ran on a platform of removing education tax from property over the next ten years. We believe that the fairest way to fund education is through general revenues, not on the backs of property owners.

Manitobans obviously agreed, as our government was re-elected in 2019 with 36 seats, forming the largest back-to-back majority governments in Manitoba history. Electors across this province rewarded the hard work done by my colleagues in our first term, on fixing the finances, repairing the services and rebuilding the economy.

In my constituency of Riding Mountain, the news that education will be funded entirely by general revenues moving forward has been most welcome. As a predominantly agricultural area, producers have been paying higher and higher education tax as their land values increase.

This tax must be paid each and every year, despite the fact that their farm income is affected by many variables, such as weather, world commodity prices, and interest rates. Business owners are the same. Hotels, for example, have been hit hard with low occupancy rates due to the pandemic, but their education property tax is a fixed expense.

Paying for education by every Manitoban is the fairest way to go. That's the way it is done in every other province. High-income earners pay more taxes. High spenders pay more PST. What could be fairer? Since debate began on the education tax reduction act, it's been laughable to see the arguments the NDP have come up with for not removing education tax from property. They are resorting to class warfare, saying that the owners of highly assessed properties will receive more money than those with lower assessed properties.

Newsflash, Mr. Deputy Speaker: that's the way it works. If your property is assessed higher than my property, you have always paid more education tax. The reverse, obviously, is then true as well: you will receive a larger rebate. It's hard to listen to opposition speaker after speaker saying the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer, especially when many of them will receive healthy rebate cheques.

The NDP argument that renters, who have never paid education tax, should get a rebate is hard for most thinking people to comprehend. It's the landlord that pays the education tax. The landlord will get a rebate and renters will see any rent increases frozen until the end of 2023. A reduced tax burden on landlords, which should allow them a slightly better return on their investment, could also spur them into building more rental properties, which would give renters more choice in the marketplace.

The member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) was apparently convinced in 2016 that a new way of funding education was necessary. But since being indoctrinated into the NDP caucus in 2019, he now seems to have had a change of heart. In 2016, when he was chair of the Winnipeg School Division, he told the Winnipeg Free Press—[interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order.

It's hard to hear the person who's speaking. There's so much conversation and heckling going on. Could everybody just calm it down a little bit, and so we can hear the individual for Riding Mountain give a speech?

Mr. Nesbitt: Thank you for that intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In 2016, when the member for Fort Garry was the chair of the Winnipeg School Division, he told the Winnipeg Free Press that the education property tax levy was a regressive tax and that Manitoba needed to find another way to fund schools.

I think the member for Fort Garry really does believe what he said in 2016 and feels the education tax reduction act should pass. He may be the lone voice in his caucus that supports The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, but he has been stifled by his colleagues. So that is why he's introduced Bill 229 today. Deep down, he believes that removing education tax from property is the right thing to do, as do the majority of Manitobans. And he is charting a new course by trying to block our government from taking any credit for it.

Our PC caucus members are proud to have their names attached to initiatives our government is doing to improve the lives of Manitobans. Whether it be our Better Education Starts Today plan, our plan for better health care, sooner across all of Manitoba, our work to improve access to child care across the province, or the removal of education tax on property, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and ministers want Manitobans to know they are working for them each and every day.

Sending out a letter with a rebate cheque, like the cheque that the education reduction act will provide for, is the right thing to do. A letter explaining the rationale behind the taxpayer funds being returned is ultimate transparency. One has to ask why the NDP are afraid of an elected member of a government putting their names on a mailing to a taxpayer. There has to be more to it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (10:50)

For the last few weeks, we have heard each of their members almost giddy about a public opinion poll that apparently was favourable to them. On this side of the House, we know that the only poll that matters is the one that is taken on election day, and that's not until the fall of 2023.

I suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that members of the NDP caucus are already having informal chats about who will become a minister in the government they believe they are going to form sometime in the future. There may even be talks of who will lead them into the next election.

The grins on their faces these last couple weeks as they continue to block legislation that would return hard-earned taxpayers' money back to them in the form of a rebate are shameful. Manitobans overwhelmingly endorse the platforms put forward by our party in the last two provincial elections. They know they can trust our government to do what we say we are going to do. That's why the NDP is afraid of taxpayers knowing who, what and why they are receiving a rebate cheque.

Bill 229 is a bill that is intended to shroud any government payment to a taxpayer in secrecy. We are an open government and accountable for our policies and decisions and will continue to be as we move forward in our mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm really pleased to be speaking in favour of this bill and this resolution, and it's important. It's important to know that, you know, as politicians we're in this role to help the people of Manitoba. We should take that responsibility very seriously. And in that seriousness of that responsibility, it is to be doing right by Manitobans, all Manitobans, and part of that is to look and analyze the impacts of the types of legislation that we're going to be bringing forward.

And obviously, this Bill 229 is in response to some of the government's obvious and clear actions and—specifically around Bill 71. And it's important to note that when you propose a bill like Bill 71, the impacts that it has are significant and they're real.

And to—for members, like the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), to simply say that, oh, of course renters aren't going to get a benefit because they don't pay school property tax completely ignores the fact that you're giving government money away to the wealthiest Manitobans and not to the poorest

Manitobans. That's not fair. It's simply not fair to Manitobans who need the money the most.

And to look at a policy in such an isolated way is such an error of judgment and such a poor way to think critically about a policy. In fact, it's not thinking critically about a policy. It's simply looking at one line item in terms of a rebate and another line item in terms of what percentage can be sent out and putting the two together without any consideration of the impact that it'll have on other Manitobans and beyond renters, beyond people who rent, beyond people who own homes; there are whole hosts of people who fit into another category. And again, those people will receive no benefit from this.

It's important that we recognize these issues because they are significant, and without actually considering these issues, it's inappropriate for our government to be acting on policies such as this.

Now, I will say, just to wrap it up, that this bill, this resolution 229 is important for the fairness aspect. And we got into this role to help Manitobans out in their jobs, in their lives, not just to promote ourselves or our political parties and get our names on cheques to advertise in a sly or clever way to Manitobans as we send them back rebates of their own money. But it should be to truly help them.

Bill 229 goes to the fairness of actually helping Manitobans. And I believe that the government should reconsider their actions on Bill 71 as it clearly demonstrates that they consider—they have no consideration on the fairness of their actions with respect to the people of Manitoba.

I'll leave my comments there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and hopefully we can move this bill forward.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): It's always a pleasure to rise, even virtually, in the House and participate in the democratic process that we are doing this morning here with the members—private member's bill on the restriction of material accompanying government cheques act.

As I indicated, it is obviously virtual, with the continuance of the pandemic, and so I obviously look forward to that opportunity where we can sit and have a debate in person and have those conversations that we can often have in the loge and off to the side, which often are much more helpful than these hyper-partisan debates that we have through—virtually. So I do appreciate this opportunity.

But, you know, we are debating the idea that the government cannot provide information related to cheques they are sending to Manitobans. And I do find this of interest that the member opposite is talking about the ability of government—or urging government not to provide any kind of funding to its citizens.

They seem to forget, in their political memories, that back, I think it was in 2010, 2011, when Gary Doer decided to—that MPI would send cheques to everyone and sent a note with that. And, lo and behold, those cheques from Manitoba Public Insurance to every single registrant arrived, oh, just as a provincial election was being held.

Now, of course, I have no doubt that my good friends and colleagues opposite would say that was just a mere coincidence that the NDP government was sending rebate cheques at the exact moment that Manitobans were going to the polls. But I don't believe so.

So it is interesting that this member is calling for actions this morning that he and his party have historically never supported. He talks about how—and he was very passionate—about how, and I'm quoting, taxpayer money should not be used for partisan purposes.

And, frankly, that's not much more than a joke coming from members opposite. You only need to leave the city, maybe just go north of the city into the northern part of the McPhillips riding, and you will still see the occasional steady growth sign laying in some brush, covered by weeds and dirt.

And imagine this: the former NDP government spent millions of dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker—millions of dollars—on these core—plastic signs that they put throughout Manitoba, again, for the sole purpose of advertising.

In fact, I do believe the Leader of the Opposition's predecessor, Greg [*phonetic*] Mackintosh, in his book, actually joked about these steady growth signs in his own community and how he would roll his eyes, years after, seeing these signs sort of sitting in the corner, gathering dust and weeds as he sort of glanced sideways when passing it, so he wouldn't be reminded of that partisan activity that his government undertook and, of course, the cost that accompanied that activity.

I think it's incumbent upon all governments to take a look at the opportunity at the tax system, and it is always an opportunity. The member opposite who is bringing forward this legislation this morning has

said on public record that the current system of property taxation is—and, again, I quote—a regressive tax.

These are not—

* (11:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I'm—now that it's to 11 o'clock, I'm stopping debate on the private member's bill on Bill 229.

And now we're going on to a private member's resolution—and when before the matter is before us, the honourable member of McPhillips will have five minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 21—Calling Upon the Provincial Government to Support Women's Economic Recovery

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino),

WHEREAS women around the world have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Manitoba is no exception; and

WHEREAS women are overrepresented in frontline jobs, including in healthcare, education, childcare, retail and hospitality that were predominately impacted by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS BIPOC women are among the most severely impacted by the pandemic because of their over-representation in high-risk jobs such as food-processing plants and long-term care; and

WHEREAS women and BIPOC women are often paid less than men in the workforce; and

WHEREAS women and BIPOC women in frontline jobs were more likely to be temporarily or permanently laid off as a result of the pandemic as in just the first wave 63% of job losses were women; and

WHEREAS women also face the additional burden of gender roles which put family responsibilities like home schooling, childcare, and caring for aging loved ones on their shoulders; and

WHEREAS the Royal Bank of Canada report outlined that training and reskilling female workers will be essential for an equitable recovery; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has made life worse for women by raising childcare fees and refusing to implement paid sick leave; and

WHEREAS Budget 2021 does not provide any targeted supports for women to help with their economic recovery and instead cut funding to services such as childcare and post-secondary education that would help women recover from the pandemic; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has failed to use gender and race based analysis in its decision-making since taking office and Budget 2021 does not mention the word gender or race even once, demonstrating this government's lack of an economic recovery plan for women and BIPOC women.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately adopt gender- and race-based analysis in its decision-making and immediately invest in targeted support to ensure an equitable recovery for Manitoba women.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), seconded by the honourable member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino),

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense? Okay.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, miigwech, Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to get up this morning and talk about the resolution that we've brought forward this morning in respect of supports for Manitoba women and, in particular, for Black, Indigenous and POC women, who we know have been disproportionately impacted by COVID.

Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This is a good resolution. It's a good resolution to be discussing in the Manitoba Legislature because we know—particularly in the midst of a pandemic, it's an important resolution to be discussing—because we know that the impacts on women and BIPOC women have been astronomical, and we know that the impacts on women have been disproportionate. So it's important that we bring this discussion to the Manitoba Legislature on behalf of all women who we represent or who we purport to represent.

Before I begin my comments, I just want to take a quick moment to acknowledge—and I know that I personally have said this many times in the last 13 almost 14 months, but I want to take this moment to acknowledge, to lift up, to say miigwech from the

deepest parts of my being and my spirit to all Manitoba women who have carried us through this pandemic, and who have carried us through this pandemic with little recognition or support and certainly with not the financial means that they deserve.

I think all of us on this side of the House recognize the role and the responsibility that women have had during this pandemic. In a very real way, Manitoba women have been at the forefront of protecting Manitobans from COVID-19. Manitoba women have sacrificed their very lives daily on protecting Manitobans from COVID-19, and I'm talking about nurses, health-care providers, teachers, ECEs, those folks that work in our child-care centres, those folks that work in industries, small-business women owners. I want you to know and I—that I dedicate this morning our debate to you. because I recognize, like all women, our women are the backbone of our families, of our communities, of our nations, of our provinces and certainly are the backbone of this country.

And so this morning, I lift you up. I say miigwech for your critical and important work on behalf of all of us. And while it seems that no one appreciates it or perhaps that no one sees your labour and your labour of love for what you do on all of our behalf, I see you and I thank you. And so I wanted to start today's debate with those sentiments.

It's important to recognise—and I would hope that everybody in the Chamber will recognise—the impact or the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had in the lives of women. We know that—you know, I was reading a United Nations—UN women's report, and 2020 was the 25th anniversary of the Beijing platform on action.

Now, I wasn't there. I would've loved to have been there, but I wasn't there. And you know, those women and activists, many here in Manitoba, including Mary Scott, who I have a profound amount of respect for, were at Beijing, or were in Beijing.

And for those folks that don't know what the Beijing platform on action was 25 years ago, it was a moment in our history where women from across the globe met and gathered in Beijing. And it was supposed to be a threshold moment in women's human rights and the framework for gender equality across the globe. It was a moment when states, all of those signatory states to the United Nations, agreed and committed to gender equality.

And in that commitment, there were actions that were meant to take place. And part of those actions, or the core of those actions, were that states agreed that they would employ a gendered analysis on a variety of different fronts, you know, in respect of the economy, in respect of social and health and justice, all of these spheres or spaces within our respective societies, whereby women—and again, in particularly Indigenous, Black and POC women—face the greatest discrimination and rates of inequalities. And so there has been, obviously, states that have developed, you know, plans of actions and strategies coming out of Beijing.

But here's what's happened with COVID-19. COVID-19 has laid bare for all to see, across the globe, but certainly here in Canada, and certainly here in Manitoba, the inequities that still exist for women within our society, and again, has laid bare, in a very visceral way, the inequalities for Black, Indigenous and POC women. And so I think that that's one of the great lessons that have come out of COVID that we have to face head-on. We have to get our heads out of the sand whereby people believe that there is equality for women. And yes, we're further ahead than we were 25 years ago, but we're not any further ahead whereby, in the midst of a public health global crisis/emergency, the weight of that does not fall upon women. We're not anywhere close to where, in an emergency, women are not impacted, not only financially, socially, but with their very lives.

We have a lot of work to do in this country. We have a lot of work to do in this province.

* (11:10)

The member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) and I had a meeting—a Zoom meeting—a couple of weeks ago with some young Manitobans. And both the member for Union Station and I spoke about them afterwards. We're so impressed with these young women. They organized themselves when they learned and had researched about the pay inequity between women and men and, again, particularly Black, Indigenous, POC and trans women. And they organized themselves—these are 14-year-old girls—to develop a petition, and the petition states that they want us to move to a space, to a place in this province where men and women are paid equally, as we should be in 2021. It's unacceptable that there's still this pay gap in Manitoba.

And so the member for Union Station and I are working with these young women to bring forward a petition to the House, and I just wanted to use this

opportunity to lift up those young leaders, the next generation of leaders here in Manitoba.

But, again, what COVID has done has highlighted the need for real, substantial, comprehensive, courageous change to make things equal for women and men in this province.

Miigwech, Deputy Speaker.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. And questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I thank the member for bringing this legislation forward. Although the challenges posed by COVID-19 are new, calls to support women in the workplace is not.

Can the member opposite inform the House what steps the former NDP government did to address support for women's economic recovery while they were in power?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm sorry, but the member has to be kidding me, asking me a question like that, particularly since he's still sitting in this House when we know that there has been complaints brought against him from his own former female staffer who was forced to leave her job. I'm not going to answer that question.

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Thank you very much to the member for St. Johns for putting forth this private member's resolution on the need for COVID economic recovery for women. I would just also want to thank the member for St. Johns for her continued leadership in championing women's rights in Manitoba.

Can you please explain how this government has failed women during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Ms. Fontaine: I want to say miigwech to the member for Notre Dame.

Here's one really good example of how the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and every single one of his Cabinet members have failed women during the pandemic. We still have nurses and health-care providers that are on the front lines of COVID-19 and, again, protecting all of us with their very lives, with

their very bodies, with their very labour, and they still work without a contract. You would think, during COVID-19 the government would say, you know what, we've got to get that—those contracts signed and honour the labour of these folks. But no.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) for bringing forward this resolution. We are in full support of the resolution and really agree with the content of it and, again, just want to thank her for bringing it forward.

I am genuinely curious if the member could share with us where she gathered some of her information, specifically which groups here in Manitoba. I know she talked about a group of individuals earlier. Which group was this and, if so, which—or what published statistics—who published them?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, I say miigwech to the member for Tyndall Park.

There are—there is innumerable research and articles out there right now in respect of the impacts on women. In fact, I've actually sat on several international Zoom panels talking about the impacts on women. And, of course, we only have a little bit of time—I would've liked more opportunity to share that—but there's so much out there.

I also want to just take a quick second to say miigwech to the member. The member has—you know, every single day, posts the COVID numbers and the information that Manitobans need. And so I do want to honour her for that.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I'd like to thank the member for introducing this resolution so we can debate some of the needs, moving forward. Certainly, we all recognize in this House that it's been a challenging time during COVID, particularly for women, but for every Manitoban.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on the supports for business entrepreneurs that our government has put forward, now that the latest statistics suggest that 45 per cent of new business ventures are based with women.

Would she like to throw her support behind our government's effort to help the small business community?

Ms. Fontaine: I mean, let me just be clear, here. I mean, I'm sure most people know I'm pretty blunt here. The Pallister government has actually failed small businesses throughout this pandemic. And a

really good example is the Bridge Grant funding where, in their infinite wisdom, decided to leave out photographers that didn't have a storefront. It should be noted that a good majority of those photographers were women. And so, I don't know if the Pallister government really, truly has a leg to stand on, when we talk about supports for small businesses that are owned by women.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I want to thank the member for St. Johns for bringing forward this resolution. And I want to take a moment to say how proud I am to serve with her, and to—and I just want to recognize her very strong leadership in this House.

Could the member tell us, what should this government have done to mitigate the disproportionate number of COVID-19 cases among Indigenous, Black and people of colour, specifically women?

Ms. Fontaine: I want to say miigwech to my sister-colleague for that question.

First off, we know that the government had the statistics in which communities were being disproportionately impacted. We know that the government had those data for many months and chose to do nothing with those data. We know that folks that are in the—in BIPOC communities are more disproportionately impacted, in many ways because of the jobs that they occupy.

And so here we are, 13, 14 months later, and we still don't have a paid six—sick leave from the provincial government to augment what the feds have put on the table. That is certainly something that they can do today—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes, the member opposite from St. Johns continues to chirp from across the floor with her temper tantrums, with her bullying, harassment and controlling tactics on an issue she has no knowledge of and proposes to be good at dishing it out, but cannot take it.

She continues to undermine her opposition leader to take over his position. And hopefully the Winnipeg city police and chief of police will not have to be brought in to resolve this situation.

But our government supports women pursuing careers in STEM fields and non-traditional skills trades.

Can the member explain why the former NDP government—what they did to increase female representation in these fields?

Ms. Fontaine: What was that? I don't even know what that was.

Let me just say this to the member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk): there's an allegation of sexual harassment against you, and yet you still sit in this Chamber. The women and non-gender-non-binary-gender folks have to sit in this Chamber with you. It is a disgrace, and you have not a leg to stand on.

* (11:20)

Ms. Marcelino: I would like to ask the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), first of all, if she's okay? And, secondly, what would a budget that prioritizes women's economic recovery look like?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, my sister-colleague. I'm super good. I'm super fine, so I do appreciate her reaching out.

A budget that would look at recovery for Manitoba women, particularly a BIPOC woman, would certainly employ a gender-based analysis, and very simply, would put money into the hands of women so that women can get on the road to recovery.

It's quite simple. The government should be employing a gender-based analysis, but, in fact, in the 2021 budget the word gender was barely even mentioned.

Mr. Wishart: I wonder how the—I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I wonder how the member can justify her position. When they were in government, they had a scandal in terms of—in the workplace here in this very building, in terms of workplace mistreatment—how she feels she has solid footing when she brings forward this resolution.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, that's very easy. I've been fighting for women and BIPOC's rights for close to 25 years. That's the footing and the standing that I have to be able to stand in this House and speak about women's recovery in the midst of global—of a global pandemic. That's my standing.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Time for questions has expired.

Debate

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Having listened to a number of comments that have been, unfortunately, made in the

House, it's disappointing to see that there's a lot of partisan rhetoric coming from the member from St. Johns.

And I do question why this resolution was brought forward by that particular member, considering how she treated the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux), essentially dismissing all of her really great achievements at such a young age by telling her that her father was the one to get the credit for all of her achievements.

She then followed that member and her father into the hallway and attacked them both and essentially told her father that he should be ashamed of how he raised his daughter. That, to me, does not in any way define a feminist, nor someone who should be respected for their views on women and their achievements.

Having said that, this resolution, on the surface, highlights some very important elements to ensure careful consideration as we do work towards economic recovery. As a mother of four children, I certainly have had my own experiences through this pandemic that have been very taxing and challenging. So, from my perspective, I feel that I am bringing forth a perspective that is important and my voice is very much heard at the decision-making table.

Jurisdictions across Canada have learned—and are learning continuously—the important lessons in areas that have been challenged during this pandemic. However, if the member's intentions were truly to advance the needs of women and the Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, the wording would look much, much different in this resolution. It would be collaborative, with no hint of partisan rhetoric. That would be indicative of someone who truly wanted to make progress in this area. Scoring political points on the backs of Manitobans who actually need co-operation in the Chamber is a disappointing approach.

I truly have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is one of the most anti-feminist and anti-progress resolutions that I think I've seen come forward in the House. And let me just be clear as to why. Reading one of the whereas sections—whereas the provincial government has failed to use gender and race-based analysis in its decision-making since taking office—and then the therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately adopt gender and race-

based analysis in its decision-making and immediately invest in targeted supports that ensure an equitable recovery for Manitoba women.

Let me highlight why those particular elements make it impossible to support this resolution and will support my stance that this is a very anti-feminist resolution coming forward.

Particularly failed to use gender and race-based analysis in its decision-making. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government appointed Manitoba's first Black woman minister to lead a department that, arguably, is the most important when it comes to Manitoba's recovery strategy. Apparently, according to the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), her voice is not important to her entire caucus. The minister of mental health, addictions and recovery has very much been at the decision-making table of Cabinet. And the member for St. Johns dismisses her amazing contributions.

Let me highlight the Minister of Health, who also happens to be a woman, and she has led us in these past months through a most-stressful time. No one's voice or influence has been more influential in decisions being made, recently.

The Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), also loud and clear at the decision-making table as we support women and marginalized people through a once-in-a-lifetime or once-in-a-century global pandemic.

Our Minister of Status of Women, who has championed the needs of women finding themselves in violent situations, is included in these voices at the decision-making table.

Our Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke), who is leading the way in building relationships through reconciliation and mutual respect.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our member for Seine River (Ms. Morley-Lecomte), St. Norbert, who is a legislative assistant in the Department of Families, has been an absolute advocate for women and BIPOC communities as we navigate this most-difficult year.

I have had the honour of working alongside these brilliant, competent, wise and effective colleagues, and I can assure the House a gender and race lens has been present in all discussions.

And these are only the public-facing women that I have listed here. Twelve of 20 deputy ministers are women, and they play an amazingly influential role in our policy-making and decisions.

If the member for St. Johns was truly focused on promoting women's recovery, she would not stoop so low as to ignore the very real and positive contributions of the women currently in government, including the hard-working staff in our departments.

The member seems to have a disdain for women in positions of leadership who also understand fiscal responsibility. I would argue that the member may even feel intimidated by these skills because she knows if her party had had them at the time she worked in government, they may have held onto a few more seats.

Our government respects each voice as we plan for, not only short-term, but long-term economic recovery. Our focus is clear. The member for St. Johns' focus is on scoring political points. Identity politics is the NDP forte, but that accomplished nothing in their 17 years in government. It did not help increase day-care spaces. It did not address training for women in the workforce, and it certainly did not elevate the voice of women and BIPOC in government or anywhere else in the province.

Our government has invested nearly \$4 million more in child care, with nearly 500 new spaces and froze the fees for three years. We've invested over \$3 billion in education in the K-to-12 system. Investing in this education is investing in women's recovery. Four million dollars more in bursaries and post-secondary bursaries. That reveals that education, investing in women, investing in all Manitobans is—priority for our government. We have increased funding to support women seeking careers in heavy construction industry, a typically male-led industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for St. Johns intentions are very clear with this resolution. She values partisanship over people. It surely is a missed opportunity to show the ability to collaborate. Our government will continue to put Manitobans first by achieving results so that they all can succeed.

* (11:30)

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): It's a well-known fact that women have been greatly affected by this COVID recession and women in Manitoba have particularly suffered great losses. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released data last month showing that, in 2020, Manitoba women lost the second highest percentage of jobs out of all provinces in Canada and that Manitoba women's unemployment rate doubled to 10 per cent last year.

Across Canada, we are seeing that, despite making up less than half of our nation's workers, women have accounted for 63 per cent of all COVID job losses. The Canadian Women's Foundation took a closer look at these unemployment results and reported that, quote, economic losses have fallen heavily on women and most dramatically on women living on low incomes who experience intersecting inequalities based on race, class, disability, education and migration and immigration status. End quote.

The Royal Bank of Canada had similar findings, reporting that the pandemic has brought about an asymmetrical recession because it disproportionately impacts women, young people, racialized and new Canadians, while leaving others almost unscathed. This is largely due to the fact that most low-wage earners work in the service industry that's been shuttered by public health restrictions—and therefore women, who make up the majority of these low-wage earners—have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

We know this PC government's answer to those hit hardest by the COVID recession has been hard to stomach: no paid sick leave; rental rebate clawbacks, rising rents due to 100 per cent approval of above-guideline rental increases; six years of frozen child-care operating grants; cuts to long-term care; cuts to community assisted living; and cuts to services and language services for newcomer settlement agencies; cuts and repeal of the adult literacy. So these cuts, freezes, clawbacks, tax breaks for the wealthy, these are the responses of this PC government.

Faced with these findings early this past year, our jobs and economy NDP caucus subcommittee set to work on some targeted policy that we could press this government on so that we could specifically assist those in our province who have been hardest hit by job loss due to COVID. We asked some highly respected leaders in the community who are interested in this issue of women's employment to suggest some areas for us to focus on, and it's important to note that the majority of these folks that I spoke to—that we spoke to agreed to provide their written policy submissions to us on a non-partisan basis.

So I spoke to Muriel Smith, the former NDP MLA who's very active in feminist organizations; to Anna Rothney, an economist and executive director at the Manitoba Federation of Labour; to Louise Simbandumwe, the executive director of SEED Winnipeg; Molly McCracken, the director of CCPA; Carol Paul, the executive director of the Manitoba

Construction Sector; Andrea Canada, the project coordinator of the office to advance women's apprentices Manitoba; Jennifer Cooper, a Red Seal electrician and trades outreach director of Manitoba Women in Construction; Michael Barkman, the Canadian Community Economic Development Network, he's the major researcher there.

And I've done some filtering here, but their broad policy suggestions included: (1) proper funding for training and employment pathways into the trades sector; (2) growing social enterprises and focusing on government procurement strategies; and (3) job creation in the care sector, especially in long-term care, home care, community assisted-living care and child care.

Our work as a caucus on this important initiative continues. We will be continuing research on barriers to newcomer accreditation, adult literacy and adult learning programming, and more non-partisan research interviews are coming up with Manitoba Building Trades and the apprenticeship advancement office in Newfoundland.

Now, I've mentioned it before, but we've got a lot to learn from jurisdictions like Newfoundland who take an active role in supporting women in under-represented groups, helping them succeed in the certified building trades jobs. Newfoundland has 14 per cent of women certified in building trades, and compare that to Manitoba's rate of only 3.4 per cent of women in skilled trades. And Newfoundland's secret is not a secret. It's more tuition fee programs, pre-employment training, micro-credentialing, support for full-trade certification and government wage subsidies. That's very important for employers to hire people from underrepresented groups to help them land jobs after completing their training.

By 2029, women—will need at least 8,100 construction workers, and this demand will be much easier to fill if more women, newcomers, youth and Indigenous people enter the trades industry. So a COVID recovery for women needs to focus on funding for training and employment pathways into the trades sector.

The second suggestion by Manitoba community leaders included help growing the social enterprise sector. A social enterprise is an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize social goals. For instance, in Manitoba, we have Aki Energy, Diversity Food Services or BUILD would be successful examples, here.

Realigning government contracts for service procurement towards social enterprises is something that can be done quickly without spending any additional money. And this would provide jobs and training opportunities for those hardest hit by the COVID recession.

And last, a focus on growing the care economy in Manitoba, so child care, long-term care, home care, community-assisted living. Growing this care economy is perhaps the biggest piece of a post-COVID recovery for women. If COVID-19 has taught us nothing else, it is that we need a new approach to caring for each other in this country. Multiple deficiencies exposed by the pandemic need to be addressed, and this crisis has had terrible consequences for so many, especially for those in long-term care.

Good care is crucial to our health and well-being as individuals and as a society. It is a critical social infrastructure that delivers overall economic stability and growth and it is a shared responsibility, not just a personal one, or one that just falls on unpaid women's work.

This shift—this requires a shift from thinking of care as an expenditure, to understanding it as an economic driver, through investing in people and good jobs. And with this shift we can create a healthy society that can maximize its potential and excel in new ways.

Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, there is a growing consensus among many in the Canadian community and academic leaders and community leaders on the importance of the care economy. There are many signatories from distinguished Canadians across the country on a joint statement on the need to grow a care economy. You can find that joint statement on thecareeconomy.ca.

Part of that statement reads, care, both paid and unpaid, is a fundamental component of our basic infrastructure. Paid care in health and education alone is a key engine of the economy, creating—generating at least 12 per cent of GDP and 21 per cent of jobs. A well-functioning care economy is key to the functioning of all the other parts of the economy. And a care economy includes those who need and those who provide care, both paid and unpaid, and recognizes that our care needs and care provision vary throughout life.

Care is skilled work that requires on-going skills development, appropriate compensation and adequate

supports. The conditions of work are the conditions of care. A care economy requires public investment and public services to ensure equitable access to quality care. Public spending on social infrastructure is as critically important as building and maintaining our physical infrastructure.

And the statement goes on—and again, you can look it up on thecareeconomy.ca—women comprise the majority of workers in the care economy. All over the world women comprise the majority of workers in the health sector. Women represent 70 per cent of workers in the health and social sectors—that's statistics from the World Health Organization. Additionally, most health workers in the social sector are also women. They care for preschool children and nurseries, and for the elderly people in retirement homes, and folks with disabilities in community.

Our work in growing the care economy and working towards increased professionalization and increased training opportunities for the care sector work will lead to increased pay for women and underrepresented groups, and this type of work that we can do as a government can address the folks that have been the hardest hit by the COVID recession.

Thank you, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This resolution brought forward by the member from St. Johns provides me the opportunity to share with members in the Chamber the actions that our government has taken to assist all women and all Manitobans during this global pandemic.

But before I get started in responding to the resolution, I'd like to take a few moments to put a few comments on record in regard to the actions taken by the NDP during their 17 dark years in government. Actions, like raising the PST, that took money right out of the pockets of each and every woman in our province. The member from St. Johns refers to gender-based analysis, but I'd like to ask her if they used a gender-based lens in determining the impact the PST hike would have on vulnerable women, women with disabilities, or women who are senior citizens.

* (11:40)

The NDP leader of the day promised Manitobans in the 2011 election campaign that he wouldn't raise the PST, and although he went to the homes and he knocked on their doors and he looked those women, those seniors and our most vulnerable right in the eyes

and said he wouldn't raise taxes, he did, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The NDP leader said, and I quote: Those are ridiculous ideas that we're going raise the sales tax. That's nonsense. Everybody knows that. Well, it wasn't ridiculous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those tax—that PST was raised by a whole 1 per cent. Not only that, they unilaterally raised the P-S-E—no consultations with the public, no town halls and no discussions. They just jacked up that PST.

I vividly remember standing on the grounds of this beautiful legislator—Legislative Building grounds, right out in the front, at the bottom of the staircase, together, in solidarity with hundreds, if not thousands, of Manitobans, urging the NDP to rescind the PST legislation. And I remember waiting hours for at least one member of that NDP to join us on the steps. But not one of them showed up, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not the member from Elmwood, not the member from Concordia. No one showed up to defend their PST increase.

And I know that the member from St. Johns was an adviser to the NDP Status of Women minister, so I question why didn't she suggest to that NDP minister that they should scrap this legislation, knowing that it would negatively impact each and every woman in our province.

And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that wasn't enough, the NDP took away Manitobans' rights to hold a referendum.

But they didn't stop there. They expanded the PST on home insurance, a PST on salon services and life insurance, adding 8 per cent to basic and critical necessities, forcing our seniors, our most vulnerable, to choose between protecting their homes, replacing their children's eyeglasses or putting a meal on the table.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to share with the members in the Chamber that our PC government has reduced that PST increase. We've removed the PST on home, medical and critical life insurance, and we'll be removing the PST on salon services this year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're keeping our promise and we're making life more affordable for all Manitobans. I am pleased to share that our government has developed some of the most generous programs across the country—the entire country—to help our businesses bridge through this challenging time and get Manitobans back to work.

We have invested \$490 million in support programs to help businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic. And I am pleased to share that Manitoba ranked first among all provinces across the entire country in terms of supporting businesses and getting Manitobans back to work.

Based on March statistics, labour market statistics, as of March 12th, '21, Manitoba had the second lowest unemployment rate across the country, and recent labour force statistics confirm that females in Manitoba are outpacing male counterparts in returning to the workforce.

Our programs are working.

I'm also proud to share with the House that last month Manitoba had the second lowest employment—unemployment rate across the country, outpacing almost every other province, thanks to our \$490-million investment in COVID-19 support programs.

And, of course, I'm proud to share that we recently learned that 16,200 Manitobans returned back to the workforce, and of that, 12,300 of those positions were filled by women. Females in Manitoba are outpacing male counterparts in returning to the workforce. Since 2021, 16,200 women, again, have found jobs. That is almost three times the number of men.

Manitoba's unemployment rates for females is better than the national average, thanks to our relief programs. And we recognize that women have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, especially in the areas of employment. The public health restrictions impacted on our local economy, especially in the hospitality, restaurant and retail sectors, where women are traditionally employed, have been impacted. And that is why we have taken real steps to address those individuals who were working in those critical sectors—retail sectors.

I am proud of the supports our government has provided and we will continue to provide supports for women's economic recovery through this pandemic. This recession has not been a traditional recession, and our government's approach has not been traditional, either. We have taken a thoughtful and pragmatic approach at providing assistance to Manitobans, and Manitoba women.

We all know that the former NDP government's track record when it comes to supporting women. And we have been working to correct those wrongs. Our government has put forward many items in

Budget 2021 that advances supports for women in communities across our entire province. Budget 2021 increases funding in areas of health care, education, and social services by nearly \$1.5 billion—a record amount. And that includes \$156 million more for health care; \$91 million more for K-to-12 education and post-secondary education; and \$34 million for social services.

We will take no lessons on economic recovery from a party who increased debt and achieved a lower standard of services for women here in our province. Our government will always stand on the side of women, unlike the NDP, who did nothing to advance gender equality or women's rights, here in our province. And when the members opposite were approached for their assistance by a female union leader who was facing harassment, what did they do? They told her to suck it up. They showed her the door. That's not good enough for us, on this side of the House.

We made real changes to ensure that there's opportunities for women, for any individual in the public sector to come forward with any allegations that they have of harassment in the workforce, and we will continue to do that: to stand up for women in this province.

Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you for the opportunity to rise virtually today and just talk for a few minutes about ways in which this provincial government could support women's economic recovery.

And you know, I want to acknowledge something, sort of name the elephant in the room, as it came up with one of the other members as well. I do feel like I'm in a tough position, debating this in particular with the member from St. Johns as there has been some hurtful actions in the past. And I appreciate the other member standing up for me, as I do feel I was badly bullied.

But, you know, a couple of years have passed. COVID has provided some distance, and I feel that I have been able to process it and I'm stronger because of it today. By no means does this mean what happened was okay, because it wasn't. But I want to be clear that I have moved on, and I want to be able to have a working relationship with my colleagues—my colleagues in all parties. And I'm not going to let this factor into the work that I do here. So I am grateful for

the member from St. Johns for bringing this debate forward.

Now, to the resolution, Mr. Speaker, the resolution itself talks about how women all over the world have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. And we know that this is accurate for a few reasons. For example, statistically, there are more women than men working in our front lines. We have more women working in health care, more women working in education, and more women working in child care and more women working in retail and hospitality. I think it is important to acknowledge that there are exceptions to every workplace, and I believe this provincial government could be doing much more to help everyone's economic recovery throughout the pandemic.

* (11:50)

Mr. Speaker, the resolution further talks about how BIPOC women are those most severely impacted by the pandemic. In addition to the reasons above, BIPOC women and women of all—to some degree are often paid less than men. Women are more likely to be temporarily or permanently laid off, and women still face the additional responsibilities of gender roles which have been truly highlighted through this pandemic.

These gender roles include cooking at home more due to not being able to go out. They include home-schooling children more because of the schools having to adapt. They include women having to leave their workplace for child care more than men have. These are just a few examples, but all is evident that throughout the pandemic, all—and so all Manitobans really need to step up and do what we can, and we need this government to step up and help with economic recovery for women and BIPOC women.

So we are in full support of this resolution and we hope that the provincial government will commit to adopting a gender- and race-based analysis in decision making.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Clearly, the members on the other side of the House have no understanding of gender lens on the idea of social and economic recovery. Today they've also confused the action word of feminism with simply being a woman. And being a feminist does not mean you should not critique the work of women if it is not done in the service of marginalized communities. In fact, it's critically important to critique the actions that serve to hold up the anti-woman ideology often led by white men.

We white women in leadership who consider ourselves feminists have a special responsibility to listen to Black, Indigenous and women of colour leaders and community members, and ensure that that listening informs our decision-making.

No feminist in their right mind would use the term identity politics, which is a sexist and racist way to dismiss criticism about racism and sexism. It's a term we heard this morning and, sadly, it's a term that white people use when they feel threatened and scared that something is being taken away from them.

This private member's resolution is not about taking anything away from men or from white people of any gender. This resolution is about trying to find some balance between the haves and the have-nots in this province. The member from St. Johns is trying desperately to put the needs of half of our population in the spotlight and to ask for the supports and resources to help all Manitobans recover economically from the pandemic.

This is such an important resolution, yet all it's led to is personal attacks and some pretty wild accusations from the other side of the House, and that's why I know it's threatening and people think of it—that to share and to have equity means loss somehow for them.

But let's recap. The pandemic simply has not affected everyone equally. Women, especially racialized women, have been disproportionately affected due to the front-line sectors they're overrepresented in, such as health care, education, child care, retail and hospitality, being very hard hit by COVID-19. Women are also overrepresented in the service and hospitality sectors, both of which have been adversely affected by public health restrictions. Black, Indigenous and people of colour, especially women, are among the most severely impacted by the pandemic because of their overrepresentation in these high-risk jobs, such as food-processing plants and long-term care.

These are actually the facts, but the facts aren't what are being debated here this morning. It seems like what is up for debate is if the other members on the side of the House are willing to recognize facts and commit to do something about it.

Budget 2021 does not provide any targeted supports for women to help with their economic recovery and instead cuts funding to services such as child care and post-secondary education that would help women recover from the pandemic.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) of this province has repeatedly talked about getting people back to work. I mean, he made comments in the press that literally shamed people for not going to work when we were, you know, on the lockdown, but he's failed to take any meaningful action to help people to do so, especially women.

Budget 2021 doesn't even mention the words gender or race even once. It doesn't—in no place does it duck—demonstrate this government's lack of an economic—sorry—it—the fact of it not being mentioned demonstrates this government's lack of an economic recovery plan for women and Black, Indigenous and people of colour, especially women. There is no real surprise, given that the provincial government has made life worse for women during their time in office by raising child-care fees and refusing to implement paid sick leave, among many others things.

I believe that the provincial government needs to immediately adopt gender and race-based analysis in its decision-making by investing in targeted supports to ensure an equitable recovery for Manitoba women. And I'm going to say it again: Just having women at the table doesn't ensure a gender and race-based analysis.

I mean, I'm just going to go off—you know I had some notes, but I just want to talk about this a little bit. Raised as a white woman in a society that caters to me as a white woman, it takes a special effort to have a full gender-race-based analysis.

You can't just—you know, our ideas are framed and formed through a white lens, through the gender lens, so I grew up in a world that was created in—by men, by men's decision-making, by men's laws, by men in leadership. Especially at the time I grew up, there wasn't even teams for girls to play sports on because that was a men's world, right, and so—let alone men in any kind of leadership positions.

When you're raised with that as your framework, you can't naturally know how to look at the world through a gender-based lens without unlearning some of those patterns and behaviours and systems that you learned and grew up with. And the exact same thing applies to race-base issues; it applies to issues of gender and sexual orientation.

I know how hard many folks have sometimes struggled to, you know, think about new ways of talking about gender. That's a challenge for me in my mid-fifties because I've been using two-gender terms and words for most of my life, right, so I have to

unlearn that and learn to do it a different way. And we all need to work on these things and see things differently, just like the first time a woman served in the Manitoba Legislature. I'm sure it was tricky for people to stop saying mister and sir and gentlemen all the time, because that's all they'd ever known.

So, to get back to some of the points I want to make about the budget, Budget 2021 fails to mention the word gender even once. This clearly shows there is no plan for an equitable economic recovery. There's no mention of the word race—nothing—nothing about the impact and the amplified struggles faced by Black, Indigenous and people of colour during COVID, and in our society.

Or, the other alternative is, you know, you don't have that lens, and so it was missed and you have the opportunity to learn and change your thinking on that right now. The other thing is you don't care. And I still have enough optimism and hope and belief in some of the members on the other side of the House to think

that you do care, but that more effort needs to be applied here.

What this budget is missing is key investments to improve economic outcomes for women, such as investments in affordable, 'universal' public child care so that women can return to work and education.

And I think, at this point, I'm just going to wrap up my notes in case anyone else wants the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk).

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): That was changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The—when this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

The hour being 12 p.m., this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 29, 2021

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